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***Philosophia between Greek and Latin culture: naturalized immigrant or eternal stranger?***

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**Summary.** This chapter argues that comparison of Greek and Roman perceptions of philosophy in the early centuries AD reveals both divergences and similarities. *Philosophia* in this period remained on several levels a primarily Greek phenomenon, perceived as such by Greeks and Romans alike, and was thus naturally implicated in negotiations of identity and difference; it could be used both (by Greeks) as a touchstone of true civilization and (by Romans) as a marker of pointless over-refinement. But this apparently straightforward Greek-Roman split may in fact mask a deeper similarity; seen from another angle, Roman manoeuvrings over philosophy do not contest Greek approaches, but simply repeat them with local variations.

**Keywords.** philosophy, Romanization, integration, culture, *paideia*.

One of the principal aims of this volume is to promote reflection on the interplay of Greek and Roman (or Greek and Latin) culture and identity over the three hundred years between the early second and late fourth centuries AD – in

particular, on how the boundary between them was perceived and negotiated then, and how it should be perceived and negotiated in modern scholarship. The suggestion that I want to set out in this chapter is that the phenomenon – the activity, the institution – of philosophy, *philosophia*, provides a particularly rewarding means by which to pursue this objective<sup>1</sup>. As I shall argue, it shows how what was, from one point of view, a prized element in a shared Greco-Roman culture, could also, from other points of view, remain a bone of contention both between the two cultures and within each of them.

### ***A shared heritage***

We should begin by reminding ourselves what *philosophia* was in this period and context: what it had become since Plato and Aristotle, and above all what it had become since the developments of the late fourth and early third centuries BC, and their consolidation in the Hellenistic period<sup>2</sup>.

What we have to think in terms of is not some simple, homogeneous entity, but rather a complex of products and practices. *Philosophia* was, in one aspect, a body of propositions (in its own presentation, a body of truths) about ultimates – about the real structure of the world, about human nature and fulfilment, about the divine, and about reason and reasoning. At the same time, it was a continuing practice of speculation and argument, and equally importantly, a continuing

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<sup>1</sup> The rewriting of this chapter has benefited greatly from comments and advice from other participants in the conference, especially Emmanuelle Vallette, Paolo Desideri and David Konstan, and from the comments of two anonymous referees.

<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I am summarizing the position set out more fully in Trapp (2007), chs. 1 and 9. My focus is deliberately on the structural and institutional aspects of *philosophia* in the post-Hellenistic period, on *philosophia* from something like a sociological viewpoint, rather on the kinds of ideological feature picked out as distinctive of this period in Boys-Stones (2001). Hadot (1996) remains a central work in this area.

practice of self-formation – the pursuit of a well-formed and rightly functioning personality, adjusted for the achievement of happiness. It was also a public institution, entwined with the public culture, in particular the educational culture, of the city, in a landscape of schools, instructors, classes and performance. And it was a tradition – an accumulated body of canonical texts, and a pantheon of authoritative past practitioners. Moreover, to make matters still more interestingly complicated, both the present reality and the past tradition were organized not as unities, but as fields of diversity and argument: it was written into both the past history of *philosophia* and its current institutional and ideological arrangement that philosophers gathered into mutually hostile and fiercely polemical camps, challenging the as yet uncommitted to choose between them.

Under this description, it should be evident and uncontroversial that *philosophia* was in some manner part of the shared cultivation of the cultivated élite, Hellenic and Roman alike, under the early and high Empire. Some degree of knowledge of this body of material and activity, some deference to it and some willingness to engage with it were, if not quite definitional of *paideia*, at least among its more decisive indicators. It was one of the great cultural products, firmly established in the Greek-speaking world by the late Hellenistic period, that Romans had first sparred with cautiously in the second century BC, and then set themselves to appropriate and assimilate with huge energy and enthusiasm in the first century BC.

The story of that Roman assimilation is a well-known one and barely needs rehearsing now. In the accessibly surviving record, it is Cicero and Lucretius who

blaze the trail, each of them making it clear that they know very well that they are doing something new for Latin culture, both conceptually and linguistically, something which they have to argue into the reckoning; but both at the same time are emphatically confident in the value of what they are doing, and in the strength of its claims on their audiences<sup>3</sup>. But we have to remember also the existence of such pioneering monuments as Varro's *De philosophia*, Sallustius's *Empedoclea*, and the more shadowy work of Nigidius Figulus; and the substantial presence of émigré Greek *philosophoi* in late Republican Italy<sup>4</sup>.

With Seneca, a century further on in time, the need for this mode of pioneering apologetic seems to be over; it appears by now to be no longer a question of arguing that *philosophia* ought to matter to the thinking person, but of expounding what the modes of attention to it should be. Thereafter, what look like clear indications of acceptance and of achieved assimilation abound: in Seneca's own output, in the Stoic succession of Musonius Rufus and Epictetus, in Apuleius, and in the philosopher Emperor, Aurelius. Institutionally, the value of *philosophia* is officially endorsed in the first century AD by the inclusion of *philosophoi* among those qualifying under imperial legislation for immunity from taxation and liturgies<sup>5</sup>; and in the second century by the foundation of the four Imperial chairs at Athens<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> On Lucretius's co-option of Epicurean material, see Sedley (1998); the alertest recent discussion of Cicero's operations on Greek philosophy is Gildenhard (2007); but see also Auvray-Assayas (2005).

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of the territory, see Rawson (1985) 57-60, 94-7 and 282-97; Varro is discussed by Tarver (1997); Cicero's famous, and famously tantalizing, reference to the *Empedoclea* of Sallustius comes at *Q. Fr.* 2.9.3.

<sup>5</sup> On the issue of philosophy and exemptions (*ateleia*), see Millar (1977), 491-506.

<sup>6</sup> On the Imperial Chairs, see Millar (1977) 502; Hahn (1989) 119-27 (esp. 126-7).

On *some* level or levels, therefore, we are dealing with an Empire-wide phenomenon, effortlessly crossing the boundary between Greek and Latin, Eastern and Western Empire. And we might say that this is entirely appropriate to the conscious and explicit ideology of *philosophia* as a universalist calling, rooted in shared human nature, and thus blind to accidents of nationality, status and even (sometimes) gender.

We might still want to insist there is a class issue: that, whatever philosophers themselves might have wished to believe, their product remained overwhelmingly the concern and the territory of the moneyed, leisured, politically dominant élite, and that as such it was implicated in games of demarcation, exclusion and justification, of the kind analysed by Thomas Schmitz in his discussion of the social and political importance of sophistic declamation, *Bildung und Macht*<sup>7</sup>. When Plutarch, at the start of his essay on listening to lectures, encourages his addressee Nicander to believe that the turn to philosophy is the only proper way for a young adult to signal his maturing as a 'person of good sense', this is simultaneously a way of marking out a true élite within the élite, of the really as opposed to the only apparently grown up<sup>8</sup>. When Apuleius, on trial for alleged employment of black magic at Sabratha in 158 AD, pointedly contrasts a knowledge of what philosophy in general and Platonism in particular is really about with the ignorant misunderstanding of his oafish prosecutors, this is among other things an attempt to create a bond of superiority – superior knowledge and superior sensibility – between himself and the court president,

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<sup>7</sup> Schmitz (1997).

<sup>8</sup> Plutarch, *De recta ratione audiendi* 1.37c-f.

Claudius Maximus<sup>9</sup>. When Petronius in the *Satyrice* makes his character Trimalchio imagine his own funerary epitaph, and end it with the words *nec umquam philosophum audivit* – 'he never took any philosophy lessons' – this is part of the creation of a portrait of a tasteless, intellectually challenged *nouveau riche*<sup>10</sup>. But if both Greek and Roman intellectuals are playing such similar demarcation games with philosophy, that arguably only further reinforces the impression of a uniform status for it across both the Latin- and the Greek-speaking zones of the Empire.

### ***The limits of Romanization***

So far, then, I have been playing along with the suggestion that the case of *philosophia* in the period between, say, 150 BC and 250 AD is closely comparable to that of other high-cultural transfusions from Greek to Roman, Latin-speaking society over the same period: that like poetry, oratory or historiography, philosophy smoothly made the transition from the purely Greek to the jointly Greco-Roman, naturalizing into Latin as well as Greek linguistic form. But the moment one phrases the proposition as starkly and directly as that, one is of course assailed by the suspicion that this is too crude and sweeping an analysis, and that the real situation, more attentively considered, was more complicated and more interesting.

In two ways in particular. First, we are moved to ask more sceptically whether the degree of assimilation from Greek into Latin, and into a Roman context, was ever as substantial or complete for *philosophia* as it was for, say, poetry or

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<sup>9</sup> Apuleius *Apologia* 22, cf. 11-13, 36; cf. Harrison, Hilton and Hunink (2001) 14-16.

<sup>10</sup> Petronius, *Satyrice* 71.

historiography. Secondly, we may well find ourselves reflecting that there is an important contrast between the products themselves: that to a much greater extent than was true of the other cultural imports, what was there for assimilation in the case of *philosophia* was already in its own original Greek context a contested and a problematic phenomenon rather than a universally acknowledged and valued good. Neither of these two further thoughts in itself is a particularly surprising or novel one – the first of them, in particular, about the incompleteness of the Roman assimilation of Greek *philosophia*, ought to look familiar; what is less often done is to bring them together, and ask what happens when they are allowed to collide.

Let me begin by amplifying the point about the incompleteness of the naturalization. It can be most simply and strongly made in terms of language. Bluntly, Latin does not succeed in making itself a first-order philosophical language over the first two, or even three centuries AD. For all the effort that Lucretius, Cicero and their contemporaries put into forging the basis of a Latin philosophical vocabulary<sup>11</sup>, and reproducing syntactical and logical structures from the Greek philosophical repertoire, and for all the relative success they scored, the impetus was not sustained. The transition was not made from summarizing and reporting Greek philosophical work in Latin, to the widespread and systematic production in Latin of originaive philosophical work at the highest level of sophistication.

The nearest thing to an exception to this dismissive generalization is provided by Seneca, with his *Moral Epistles*, *Dialogues*, and *Natural Questions*. As has been

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<sup>11</sup> On which, see Sedley (1998) 35-61.



most carefully and persuasively argued by Brad Inwood, there are moments in all of these works at which their author does seem to be making the breakthrough into first-order philosophizing, or 'primary philosophy', in Latin. This is, moreover, not just a matter of the inclusion of sporadic passages of original analysis, such as the discussions of Platonic ontology and of causation in *Epistles* 58 and 65, or of 'preliminary passions' at the beginning of Book 2 of the *De Ira*, but of the fact that in such passages, Seneca gives a positive impression of thinking in Latin, rather than systematically referring and deferring to Greek terminology and concepts<sup>12</sup>. However, as Inwood himself makes clear, the performance is not sustained, either across Seneca's entire output, or even within one individual work. It is undeniably important that he was capable of such 'episodic outbursts', for our understanding both of Seneca's own individual achievement, and of the milieu in which he was working: he could evidently assume an audience of philosophically engaged readers who were prepared to encounter new conceptual work in Latin, even if only in relatively short bursts, rather than looking only to treatises in Greek for this dimension of philosophical nourishment. But equally, the implication seems to be that it was only in brief flashes that they were willing to find it, and that Seneca himself was willing to produce it.

As Inwood emphasizes, Seneca's Latin philosophising did not spring out of nothing<sup>13</sup>. It presupposes and builds on precedents set by predecessors one and two generations back, who combined self-conscious philosophical commitment with the choice of Latin as their professional language, and with whom Seneca

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<sup>12</sup> Inwood (1995) 71-6; on the issue of the originality of Seneca's analysis of anger, see also Sorabji (2000) 55-75 and Trapp (2007) 80-2.

<sup>13</sup> Inwood (1995) 64-7, 69-70.

himself had direct or indirect family connections: Quintus Sextius, his son Sextius (?Niger), and his pupils Cornelius Celsus, Lucius Crassicius and Papirius Fabianus, of whom the latter two are on record as having undergone an identifiable 'conversion' to philosophy, from grammar and rhetoric respectively<sup>14</sup>. But although this gives a context for Seneca's own work, it does not lock it into a story of steady progress towards an autonomous Latin philosophical culture. There is no indication that anything in the written work of these predecessors came up to Senecan standards, and – still more significantly for the argument of this chapter – there was to be no subsequent continuation. Just as a good few of Seneca's own teachers, like Sotion and Attalus, seem to have stayed with Greek<sup>15</sup>, so too in the next two generations, significant figures who might have chosen to write in Latin did not do so, above all the native Italian Musonius Rufus, and his pupil Epictetus<sup>16</sup>.

Seneca, then, looks like a relatively isolated case, who only partly disturbs the proposition that Latin remains in general a secondary philosophical language. With other works of the first two centuries AD, the pattern holds securely. Apuleius's *De deo Socratis*, *Florida* and (if it is really his) *De Platone* are in their different ways very obviously exercises in the repackaging of existing doctrine and argument, not in the extending of any major boundaries; so too, more obviously

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<sup>14</sup> The report of Fabianus's 'conversion' is given by the Elder Seneca in *Contr.* 2 Pref. 1, that of Crassicius's in Suetonius *De Grammaticis* 18; what exactly underlies the cliché in each case is, of course, uncertain.

<sup>15</sup> Sotion: *Epp.* 49.2; 108.17-23; cf. *Neue Pauly* 11.754-5, sv 'Sotion (I)'. Attalus: *Epp.* 9.7; 63.5-6; 67.15; 72.8; 81.22; 108.3-4, 13, 23; 110.14-20; cf. Seneca Rhetor, *Suas.* 2.12.

<sup>16</sup> Inwood (1995), 67 (where the somewhat whimsical suggestion that Musonius really ought to have used Latin not Greek is supported by a questionable reading of Arrian, *Discourses of Epictetus* 1.17.16).

still, the Latin translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo* and the περὶ ἐξουηνείας also preserved in the Apuleian corpus.

It is no escape to plead that *all* philosophical writing over the first two centuries AD was similarly secondary, and working within already established limits, and that therefore philosophical discourse of the period in Latin cannot after all be placed on a substantially different level from that in Greek. It is indeed true that in *some* Greek writing of the period – Arrian's Epictetus, Dio Chrysostom, Maximus of Tyre, and some of Plutarch's *Moralia* – we see work of an essentially derivative and secondary kind, packaging and transmitting established truths rather than opening new avenues of argument or analysis. But even in the *Moralia*, in both surviving texts like the essay on the generation of the soul in the *Timaeus*, and in titles of lost works from the Lamprias catalogue<sup>17</sup>, a more sophisticated and technical level of philosophical argument is on display. And it is clear that the more technical level, of first order engagement with doctrinal debate, was amply represented over the first and second centuries AD in other Greek philosophical writing: above all in the form of commentaries, by the likes of Ariston, Andronicus, Boethus, Alexander of Aegae, Aspasius, Taurus, Alexander of Aphrodisias – and indeed Seneca's teacher Sotion of Alexandria<sup>18</sup>. It is of course true that not all philosophical commentaries aimed for the same level of conceptual and exegetic sophistication; then as now, some were designedly more basic and introductory than others<sup>19</sup>. But as recent scholarship has amply

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<sup>17</sup> For example, item 66, *On the fact that in Plato's view the Universe had a beginning*; or item 152, *Reply to Chrysippus on the First Consequent*.

<sup>18</sup> For a convenient brief account, see Sharples (2007) 510-12.

<sup>19</sup> Much of Aspasius's commentary *Nicomachean Ethics* 8, for instance, works on a fairly straightforward exegetic level, keyed more to the school classroom than to advanced scholarly debate; see Barnes (1999) 23-7.

demonstrated, it is simply unrealistic to place the commentary as a form of philosophical discourse categorically in the same class of the secondary and the derivative as the popularizations of an Apuleius or a Dio. On the contrary, it was precisely in (some) commentaries that much of the hard, technical work was being done, where philosophy as argumentation was being moved forward<sup>20</sup>.

This in turn in fact provides us with another way of expressing what was not happening in Latin, and at least one of the reasons why. There were no philosophical commentaries in Latin, in which first-order Latin philosophizing might develop; and there were none because there were no canonical philosophical texts in Latin to be commented on; the notion of Latin commentary on Greek canonical texts was simply not one to be entertained. In similar vein, one might also point to the asymmetry in habits of code-switching in philosophical writing in the first two centuries AD, whereby Latin authors regularly include words and phrases, sometimes longer interpolated chunks, in Greek, while the reverse phenomenon, snatches of Latin incorporated into Greek philosophical discourse, is never found<sup>21</sup>.

Linguistically and textually, therefore, *philosophia* did indeed remain stubbornly Greek in its core and primary manifestations. This primary core was it is true entirely accessible to Latin speakers of the educated bilingual elite, who may often have begun their learning of Greek almost as early in life as they began their

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<sup>20</sup> For example, Boethius's discussions of Time and Substance as analysed by Gottschalk (1990) 75-7; or the disagreement between Aspasius and Andronicus over the definition of emotion, as analysed by Sorabji (2000) 133-8.

<sup>21</sup> On code-switching in educated Latin writing, see Adams (2003) 297-356.

Latin<sup>22</sup>; but the sense of a divide cannot but have remained, given the continuing sense of Greek as a separate and senior culture. If we ask if and when this linguistic situation eventually began to change, the reasonable answer seems to be that it was not until the third and fourth centuries, with the construction of a speculative discourse in Latin for Christian purposes. That is to say, a new cultural impetus from outside the old closed system of traditional Greco-Roman *paideia* was needed in order to break the spell and to liberate the potential of Latin for philosophical expression – a potential which continued to develop beyond later antiquity into the middle ages and the early modern period. A relatively severe view might say that the decisive tipping-point was only reached with Boethius (c.480-c.524), and his creation of a body of commentary on Latinized logical treatises; but before that hugely important stages in the creation of Latin speculative discourse are clearly marked by Augustine and Jerome in the later fourth and early fifth centuries, and by the earlier fourth-century translation work of the likes of Calcidius and Marius Victorinus.

But the point about the stubbornly persisting Greekness of *philosophia* in the first few centuries AD is not only one about the primary language of expression. It can also be made in terms of institutions and practices. For all that the reputation and status-claims of *philosophia* were Empire-wide, and could be heard formulated in Latin as well as in Greek; for all that the legislation conferring immunities on philosophers (along with doctors and *grammatici*) applied equally to western Latin as to eastern Greek civic communities; the simple presence and visibility of

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<sup>22</sup> Quintilian in *Inst.* 1.1.12-14 may be advocating an enthusiastic, educationalist's extreme, but his enthusiasm would be odd if his preferred policy was completely out of touch with current norms.

philosophers, and the readiness with which they could find the appropriate spaces for their activities, were not the same. Philosophers, and their characteristic modes of interaction with those around them seem to have been more marginal and to have operated across a narrower range in Latin-speaking than in Greek-speaking communities. A philosopher in a Greek city of the second century could be found giving lessons and lectures in both private (or semi-private) and public venues, both as long-term resident (sometimes at public expense) and as temporary visitor; and he did so in surroundings characteristically marked by the traces of his recent and more distant predecessors, in sculpted and inscribed stone, in mosaic and painted plaster, and struck on coins. Philosophers in Latin-speaking cities give the impression of having been much less integrated on every level. The absence of a direct Roman-culture equivalent of the gymnasium, which, with its associated libraries and meeting- and lecture-rooms, was such an important aspect of the enabling physical infrastructure for so much of Hellenic high culture, is an important part of the story here, but still only one factor among several<sup>23</sup>. It mattered also that images of the great philosophers of the past were not displayed in such numbers in any Latin-speaking city as in the Greek world, that the word *philosophus* was not to be read as frequently on honorific and commemorative inscriptions, and that in physical appearance – live or in effigy – the well-dressed philosopher was more manifestly a foreigner in Latinate than in Greek surroundings<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> The question of the public presence of philosophers in Greek cities and in Rome is taken up by Hahn (1989) 137-47 and 148-55, but without a direct contrast between the two sets of surroundings, and without any consideration of visual and monumental cultures. Aspects of the visual dimension are discussed by Zanker (1995), but principally on the level of the iconography of individual representations of philosophers; he has little to say about the volume of representation in public space and its cumulative effects.

<sup>24</sup> Philosophical dress and coiffure was indeed meant to set the *philosophos* apart in a Greek setting too, as an individual with distinctive loyalties and commitments, but it did

The breadth of the gap should not be exaggerated, and there is evidence to suggest that it closed to some extent in the course of the first century AD. Although earlier generations of Greek philosophical migrants to Rome, particularly in the first century BC, had found their main footholds as recipients of private patronage in moneyed houses, rather than as more autonomous participants in the cultural life of the city<sup>25</sup>, it did not take long for some at least of their successors to set up separate schools of their own. Seneca's references to his philosophical mentors in particular paint a picture of a range of different venues and styles of interaction<sup>26</sup>, including attending formal classes in just the same style as would be normal in a Greek city of the same sort of period. Thus, when in *Ep.* 108.3 he describes attending the school of the Stoic Attalus, and being first to arrive and last to leave, and approaching him with points for discussion 'even when he was taking a walk', and adds that Attalus not only tolerated such approaches but positively encouraged them, this chimes both with Aulus Gellius's picture of relations between Calvenus Taurus and his pupils in Athens a century or so later<sup>27</sup>, but also with idealizing pictures of the philosopher in action given by Plutarch in his *De audiendo* and *An seni*, which date from rather closer to Seneca's own time<sup>28</sup>. Also at around the end of the first century, Pliny the Younger's account of the Stoic Euphrates in *Epistles* 1.10 gives the impression of a philosopher at Rome who could be encountered and

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so by modifying Greek norms, so must always have looked a degree less foreign in Greek than in Latin surroundings.

<sup>25</sup> See Rawson (1985) 38-42, 56-60; Rawson (1989); Hahn (1989) 148-55; Inwood (1995) 63-4, citing Donini (1982) ch. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Griffin (1976) 37-43.

<sup>27</sup> Gellius *NA* 1.9.8; 2.2; 7.10; 7.13; 8.6; 9.5.8; 10.19; 12.5; 17.8; 17.20; 18.10.3-7; 19.6.2-3; 20.4.

<sup>28</sup> Plutarch, *De audiendo* 11.43e-f; *An seni* 26.796de.

consulted both in formal scholastic surroundings and in day-to-day social encounters<sup>29</sup>.

However, a gap still remains. In simple quantitative terms, there must have been fewer *philosophi* about in Latin-speaking than in Greek-speaking communities throughout the period we are considering, operating in a more limited range of contexts and surroundings. It would have been easier not to come across them, and they would always have looked more exotic and unusual when you did.

### ***Reciprocal perceptions***

*Philosophia*, then, stands at the edge, and so to speak projects beyond the outer edge, of the Roman assimilation of Hellenism; it is the limiting case, the cultural element which, in spite of claiming for itself the status of the heart of things, the jewel in the crown of true (Hellenic) civilization, did not fully transplant. If this was its position, *ad extremum finem*, then it is hardly surprising to find *philosophia* caught up in games of definition, from both a Hellenic and a Roman starting-point. We move on, then, from the question of linguistic and institutional integration, to the question of perceptions.

From a Greek vantage-point, *philosophia* could be constituted – by those who wanted to play the game this way – as one of those tell-tale markers that betrayed the ultimate Roman inability to become civilized, and thus their ineradicable inferiority in culture if not in power to the Hellenes. The best known, as well as

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<sup>29</sup> Sherwin-White (1966) 108 dates this letter to some time after January 98. For Euphrates, pupil of Musonius Rufus, see the divergent analyses of Grimal (1955) 380-1 and Frede (1997).



the most spirited, expressions of this perception come in Lucian, in his *Nigrinus* and *De Mercede Conductis*. In the *Nigrinus*, we hear the eponymous philosopher drawing a bitter contrast between the ease with which a philosophical soul can exist in the enlightened society of Athens, and the contrasting sense of alienness and discomfort that assailed him in the corrupt environment of Rome. He pictures his return to Rome as a descent into the Underworld – τίπτ' αὖτ', ὧ δύστηνε, λιπὼν φάος ἡελίοιο – and his subsequent decision to withdraw from this madhouse into domestic philosophical seclusion is compared both to Hector's rescue from the carnage of battle by Zeus, and to Odysseus's escape from the Sirens<sup>30</sup>. The *De Mercede Conductis*, for its part, expatiates on the indignities inflicted on cultivated Greek intellectuals retained in rich Roman households; they are given their place there not because of a genuine interest in and sympathy with what they represent, but from a desire for a mere show of culture and depth. The most vivid and telling image in the essay is that of the venerable Stoic Thesmopolis prevailed on to carry his employer's wife's lapdog during an outing. The pampered pet peers out from the philosopher's cloak just under his bushy beard, and does what dogs tend to do. The mocking reaction that this excites from another of the entourage – the unfeeling witticism that the Stoic has gone Cynic – only accentuates the atmosphere of alienation and insult<sup>31</sup>.

On a milder but still significant note, Dio Chrysostom observes in his autobiographical *Oration* 13 that when he travelled from the Greek-speaking communities, in which he had begun his transformation from dispossessed exile

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<sup>30</sup> Lucian, *Nigrinus* 17-20, citing *Od.* 11.93-4, *Il.* 11.163-4, and *Od.* 12.160-200.

<sup>31</sup> Lucian, *De mercede conductis* 33-4.

into philosopher, to Rome, he was no longer able to engage in the same style of philosophical interaction with those around him as before.

οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ ἐπειρώμην διαλέγεσθαι Ῥωμαίοις, ἐπειδὴ με  
ἐκάλεσαν καὶ λέγειν ἡξίουσιν, οὐ κατὰ δύο καὶ τρεῖς ἀπολαμβάνων ἐν  
παλαίστραις καὶ περιπάτοις· οὐ γὰρ ἦν δυνατόν οὕτως ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ  
πόλει συγγίγνεσθαι· πολλοῖς τε καὶ ἀθρόοις εἰς ταὐτὸ συνιοῦσιν, ὅτι  
δέονται παιδείας κρείττονος καὶ ἐπιμελεστέρας, εἰ μέλλουσιν  
εὐδαίμονες ἔσεσθαι τῷ ὄντι κατ' ἀλήθειαν, ἀλλὰ μὴ δόξῃ τῶν πολλῶν  
ἀνθρώπων, ὥσπερ νῦν· ....

And thus it came about that I too endeavoured to talk to the Romans when they summoned me and invited me to speak. I did not see them in little groups of two or three in *palaestrae* and *peripatoi*, as it was not possible to adopt that mode of association in that city; instead I addressed them in large groups gathered together, telling them that they needed a more masterly and more painstaking education, if they were ever to be happy in truth and reality and not merely in the opinion of the majority, as was now the case; .....<sup>32</sup>

Speaking to a Greek audience – whether in his home town of Prusa or elsewhere – Dio both boasts of his own pulling power as speaker, and reminds them that even so, Rome is not as well organized as they are for the reception of this kind of teaching<sup>33</sup>. This does not carry the same charge of scorn as Lucian's satirical

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<sup>32</sup> Dio *Or.* 13.31.

<sup>33</sup> The title given to this oration in the manuscripts does indeed allege it to have been delivered in Athens, but I believe this to be a misapprehension, based on the depiction of Socrates within the speech.

depictions, but it does still establish a status difference between Greek and Roman receptiveness to philosophical culture, in a fairly pointed way<sup>34</sup>.

On the Roman side of the fence, it is equally easy to find an answering readiness to use the rejection, or at any rate the restriction of *philosophia* as a means of articulating Roman-ness. The most striking examples are hugely familiar, and often cited: Tacitus's *Agricola*, recalling how in his enthusiastic youth his mother had to hold him back from imbibing too deeply of philosophical study – *studium philosophiae acrius, ultra quam concessum Romano aut senatori, hausisse* (*Agric.* 4.3); Quintilian in Book 12 of the *Institutio*, laying down his specifications for a *Romanus sapiens*, who unlike a *philosophus* works *non secretis disputationibus, sed rerum experimentis atque operibus* (12.2.7), and directly contrasting Greek facility with theoretical *praecepta* and Roman strength in practical *exempla* (12.2.29-30); Aulus Gellius in *Noctes Atticae* 13.24 in similar vein holding up the elder Cato as an inspiration to frugality and endurance that he says he finds far superior to *Graecae istorum praestigiae philosophari sese dicentium*.

The vision of philosophy as characteristically Greek in its over-refinement, as diversion and debilitation, as mere theory outshone by practical Roman achievement, is not one that goes away; this was a viewpoint constantly available for re-occupation, and clearly repeatedly found useful. Taking this together with Lucian's satire, we now seem to have replaced our initial picture of a philosophy as a shared good of the cultivated elite, with an alternative picture of philosophy as a

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<sup>34</sup> It is perhaps also significant that Dio is here comparing himself going to Rome ("I too endeavoured ... ") with Socrates summoned to (semi-Hellenized) Macedonia by Archelaus.

locus of reciprocal scorn: Greeks sneering at Romans for mangling their involvement with philosophy because they constitutionally lack the insight and good taste to understand and value it correctly, and Romans replying that the best of them, at least, the most truly and securely Roman, deliberately hold back because they see and understand only too clearly what it involves, and do not want it.

But this is once more too neat and simple, in a number of ways. On the one hand, it needs to be underlined that what we are confronted with here are not universal and obligatory positions – '*the Roman*' or '*the Greek view*' (as if there could be such a thing) – but available options that might or might not be taken up in a given instance. In addition, we will surely miss the subtlety of the real situation, both with *philosophia*, and with senses of Greek and Roman identity, if we do not make the effort to relate this exercise in boundary drawing and stipulating national identities back to the broader picture of the status of *philosophia* as an element in high culture with which we began. And the way to begin to take account of both these qualifications is to look more closely and carefully at the detail of what Tacitus, Gellius and Quintilian have to say, and the context in which they say it.

With Gellius, the point is that the sneer at *Graecae praestigiae* and the hypocritical pretence of moral virtue is a fleeting one, just one note in the richer polyphony of his miscellany. The focus on Cato's morals in 13.24 is only one of many invocations of Cato, which more often highlight his Latinity and his oratorical prowess than his suspicions about Greek philosophy. And the swipe at philosophy co-exists in the broader context of the *Noctes* with a much more

sympathetic and respectful engagement not only with classic philosophical texts (e.g. Plato's *Gorgias* in 10.22 and *Symposium* in 17.20), but also with contemporary and near-contemporary Greek and Greek-using philosophers: Epictetus for example in *Noctes* 9.1 and 17.19, Musonius Rufus in 5.1, and above all the man Gellius himself studied with, the Athenian Platonist philosopher Calvenus Taurus. There are moments when Gellius recalls an affectionate teasing, directed by philosopher Taurus at his rhetorically-minded pupil in the early days of their acquaintance – '*heus' inquit' tu, rhetorisce, ...*' in *Noctes* 17.20.4 – but Taurus's disquisitions to his pupils are nevertheless reported in loving and respectful detail (above all, *Noctes* 12.5). It is from Gellius too, however, that we get the more ambiguous story of the Stoic philosopher caught in a storm at sea, taxed by his fellow travellers with showing apparently unStoic signs of distress, and defending himself by reference to the now missing fifth book of Arrian's *Discourses of Epictetus* (*Noctes* 9.1). Exactly where sympathies are supposed to rest at the end of this story – with the philosopher, on the understanding that his self-exculpation is a reasonable and successful one, or with the sceptical onlookers, who think they have caught him in a failure to adhere to his principles – is unclear; but on either reading, it is an anecdote that adds a further nuancing layer to Gellius's presentation of *philosophia* and its adherents.

In the case of Tacitus's *Agricola*, a look at the larger context shows that something more of a balancing act is being performed. *Philosophia* is certainly characterised as something that a good Roman, looking forward to a public career, must be careful not to get too enmeshed in; and it was youthful over-enthusiasm (his *incensus ac flagrans animus*) that threatened to push Agricola over the line. We

perhaps also catch a deliberate snub in Tacitus's choice of wording: as he phrases it, Agricola's enthusiasm was tempered not only by greater maturity (*aetas*), but also by *ratio*, reasoned thought – philosophy may *claim* to be all about *ratio* (λόγος, λογισμός), Tacitus seems to suggest, but what truly reasonable thinking leads to is a moderation not an intensification of philosophical commitment. But there are positive notes too. It remains a tribute to Agricola's good character and high spirit that he became so enthusiastic for the pursuit of *sapientia* in the first place; and he did derive a real and lasting benefit from it, once things had been put in their proper proportion (*retinuitque ... ex sapientia modum*). Moreover, the Greek element in the surroundings in which Agricola grew up and received his early formation – the *Graeca comitas* of Marseilles, which is what was responsible for philosophy having been in the air around him – is a good thing. And in the preface to the essay, just before we come on to the topic of Agricola's origins and early life, the persecution of philosophy and the *bonae artes* in general has been held up by Tacitus as a mark of the corrupt political order that has only just at the time of writing been put an end to by Nerva and Trajan. Anything frowned on by bad Emperors cannot itself be all bad.

The case of Quintilian, thirdly, is the most interestingly edgy and nuanced of all, thanks to the particular set of targets he sets himself in the *Institutio*. Here too one gets the strong impression of a balancing act being carried out in what is being said about *philosophia*, in which a necessary commitment to a Greek-derived model of education, literacy and culture has to be held in tension with Roman self-respect. The ideal Roman orator, according to Quintilian, has no moral lessons to learn from the over-nice theorizing of Greek philosophers, and he simply cannot

afford to withdraw as they do from the real world of political engagement and achievement. He is justified in this attitude not only by his own superior native Roman record of practical achievement and demonstrations of virtue in action, but also by the allegedly manifest hypocrisy and degeneracy of contemporary philosophers, whose arrogant assertion that only they are truly qualified to speak about moral topics is fatally undercut by their own failings (1 *Praef.* 15-19; 12.3.11-12). Yet *philosophia* and its classic Greek proponents cannot simply be removed from the curriculum that forms the orator. Not only will the propaedeutic study of poetry (*grammatica*) be imperfect without a grasp of philosophical doctrines (1.4.4). In the sphere of rhetorical education proper, both doctrinal knowledge and acquaintance with forms of philosophical argumentation are strongly advantageous, provided that the essential difference between lecture-theatre and forum is kept firmly in mind (10.1.35-36); and classic Greek philosophical texts, from Plato and Xenophon to the old Stoics, are a fixture on his reading list (10.1.81-84), in a way that Roman philosophical writing simply cannot match (10.1.123-31).

Of these three specimen Roman attitudinizings, it is Quintilian's that is most manifestly engaged in a work of containment. The reasons why he finds himself in this position are not hard to see: principally because he writes explicitly as an educationalist, but also in part because of his political circumstances. His topic is the training required to form the highest human type, the model of high achievement and the ideal life, and he speaks as one himself professionally engaged in the realization of this model. But this is territory which everyone knows is claimed as its own by *philosophia*, and has been so claimed since Plato's

*Republic*, itself one of the formal models for Quintilian's treatise. If oratory, and the training of the orator, are to be securely established where Quintilian wants to put them, on the moral and existential high ground, then the rival claim of philosophy has to be convincingly rebuffed. But at the same time, there is another contrary risk to be avoided too. Too extreme or absolute a rebuff to *philosophia* would be in danger of making oratory and the orator look both intellectually irresponsible, and criminally insensitive to one of the great achievements of civilized life.

Politically, the significant factor is that Quintilian is writing under the Emperor whose public relations with philosophers were so condemned by Tacitus in the *Agricola* preface, on the strength of both the execution of philosophically motivated individuals such as Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio, and the collective expulsion of philosophical teachers in 93 AD. Domitian was not the first to make a political target of philosophers – there had been individual banishments and executions under both Nero and Vespasian, and a collective expulsion under the latter in 71 – but the fact that this intermittent imperial habit had gone into its third round with him cannot but have influenced the atmosphere in which Quintilian wrote<sup>35</sup>.

On both political and educational grounds, therefore, a middle course had to be steered, and Quintilian did this by a combination of means. Playing the Roman card was one of them, and a strong one; but it was intertwined with others: the

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<sup>35</sup> For the issue of the official persecution of philosophers, and the so-called 'philosophical opposition' to the Principate, see McMullen (1966) 46-90; Brunt (1975); Griffin (1989); Trapp (2007) 226-33.



contrast between idle theorizing and real, effective practice; the distinction between the great classics of the honoured past of philosophy and the degenerate hypocrisy of its modern representatives; and the indignant rejection of the idea that philosophers have exclusive as opposed to shared rights to speak authoritatively about questions of morality and the good life.

Quintilian, Gellius and Tacitus, then, all use the thought that philosophy is in the end too Greek as a way of declining to take it at its own high estimation of itself; but they all employ it as a tempering manoeuvre, rather than as a way of rejecting the activity and its practitioners categorically. These Romans at least do not want to look boorish and under-educated by turning their backs on philosophy entirely, but they are distinctly keen to find ways of keeping it from getting above itself.

### *A pervasive concern*

Romans restrict philosophy, and use a distinction between Greekness and Romanness as one particularly effective way of doing so. Is it therefore wrong to have begun this chapter, as I did, by depicting philosophy as a shared product, uniting rather than dividing the cultured élite of the Empire? Does the case of philosophy after all allow us to identify an important asymmetry between the Greek and the Roman? The answer I want to suggest in conclusion is both a yes and a no.

Yes, there is an asymmetry to be seen here in the linguistic and institutional bedding of philosophy, as described above; there is no getting away from that. Philosophical discourse was developed to a higher degree of sophistication in

Greek than in Latin, and was more institutionally at home in Greek-speaking cities. On the high political level, this lesser integration both made possible and reinforced the periodic imperial edicts expelling the representatives of *philosophia* from the centre of power – a gesture that simply would not have been possible in a Greek context, even if the necessary power structure had existed to enable it. But in another sense, it can be argued that there is less of an asymmetry than attention to surface attitudinizing might suggest.

As we have seen, Roman unease about philosophy – about indulging it and indulging in it more than a certain distance – was expressed in other ways than simply in terms of its excessive Greekness. The same function was performed by complaints about philosophical imperialism, its tendency to claim unrealistically exclusive rights over issues of virtue and right living; by complaints about the hypocrisy of philosophers; and by the drawing of a pointed contrast between the philosophical classics and their degenerate modern successors. And these further complaints are, when one looks, not by any means unique to individuals writing in Latin or observing from a self-consciously Roman standpoint. Greeks too in the early centuries AD can readily be seen expressing scepticism about the more aggressively imperialist claims of philosophy, and looking for what can be read as comparable strategies to blunt, deflect or sidestep them.

Most obviously, Quintilian's desire to strike back on behalf of rhetoric, and push philosophy off both the educational and the political (the civic) high ground, is of course utterly familiar in a Greek context too. This is the old sparring match between philosophy and rhetoric, first conceptualized and articulated by Plato,

endlessly replayable and replayed. For a convenient Greek parallel, we do not need to look any further than Aelius Aristides, and his *Orations* 2 and 3, *In Defence of Oratory* and *In Defense of the Four*, composed in the later 140s AD. In these two pieces, Aristides takes issue with the contemptuous dismissal of public speaking delivered by Plato in the *Gorgias*, dealing first with the Platonic claim that there is no such thing as a true science (*technê*) of oratory (*Or.* 2), and secondly with the damning verdict delivered against the great Athenian orator-politicians of the fifth century (*Or.* 3). Like Quintilian, Aristides is careful to balance his rebuttal of the Platonic attack (in his eyes, a classic case of unwarranted philosophical aggression<sup>36</sup>) with an underlying reassurance that he respects the truths of a more temperate and reasonable *philosophia* as much as any man. For instance, it is a central part of his closural strategy to argue that Plato is really an ally, and in fact agrees in spite of himself with the laudatory view of oratory<sup>37</sup>.

But I would want to argue that, on the Greek side too, this clichéd confrontation is just one manifestation of a broader phenomenon. In Greek-speaking as well as in Latin culture, *philosophia* was widely felt not only as a great Hellenic achievement, to be cherished, honoured and perpetuated, but also as in some measure a potential source of upset, requiring careful precautionary containment. Here was a body of thought and writing which both claimed privileged rights over the highest and deepest truth, and at the same time repeatedly set itself at an angle to everyday, conventional ways of thinking and doing, relativizing the pieties and convictions of the normal world to what it claimed as higher standards, and

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<sup>36</sup> Aristides *Or.* 2.13, Plato in the *Gorgias* speaks φιλονικότερον τοῦ δέοντος.

<sup>37</sup> Aristides, *Or.* 2.438-61.

sometimes challenging them head-on. Such an uncomfortable source of implicit and explicit criticism cried out for strategies of containment, ways of not being obliged always to contemplate this criticism squarely and with unqualified deference. The greater entrenchment of *philosophia* and *philosophoi* in the elite *paideia* of the Greek half of the Empire, as both continuing activity and as an element in the accumulated cultural stock, only made the task the more serious, and efforts to respond to it all the more visible<sup>38</sup>.

Viewed in this light, Greek culture of the early centuries AD can be seen to have come up with a variety of resourceful ways of hitting back at philosophy and philosophers, and finding grounds for not taking them and their calling at its own very high estimation of itself. A very obvious element in this broader panorama of resistance and containment – perhaps in fact *the* most obvious, and certainly one not matched on the Roman side – is anti-philosophical satire, most prominently represented by the very same Lucian as we found castigating the Romans for not being receptive enough. A simple page-count is enough to establish that the effort that Lucian put into making fun of boorish Romans was as nothing to that he devoted to satirizing the pretensions, hypocrisy and self-seeking of *philosophoi*, in such works as his *Life-style Auction*, *Fisherman*, *Symposium* and *Hermotimus*.

Lucian's over-arching strategy in these works, however, is not one of blanket resistance and rejection. In a manner related to what we have already seen with Quintilian and Aristides, he is careful to evince – and to show that he is

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<sup>38</sup> See Trapp (2007) 233-56 for a more elaborate development of this perspective on Imperial period writing about *philosophia*.

presupposing in his audience – a broad knowledge of the (conventionally conceived) history of *philosophia*, and a cultivated connoisseur's affection for the literary riches of philosophical writing, even as he satirizes. He writes as someone who wishes to be perceived as knowing and loving the best of Hellenic tradition, including its high thinkers and the masterpieces of philosophical literature, and whose amusement and disaffections should correspondingly be seen as aimed at particular aspects or uses of *philosophia*, not the whole phenomenon in itself.

In theory, Lucian's combination of erudite appreciation of the philosophical classics with a satirist's scorn for their modern representatives might be dismissed as individual idiosyncrasy, rather than an indication of a more general current of opinion. But the picture of Lucian as heroic critic – the lone voice of sanity in a world of blind acceptance – is itself open to challenge, as the product of an excessively romanticized view of the author. The availability of the parallels just drawn with Quintilian and Aristides in their approach to *philosophia* and *philosophoi* might encourage us to reflect that Lucian wrote for a public, and can be presumed to have written what he believed that public was happy to hear. The fact that he produced so much philosophical satire would then as readily suggest that he found enthusiastic consumers for his product, as that he was forced to continue his 'attacks' because his message was failing to get through. In which case his satire becomes available, as I have suggested, as a symptom of one of the ways in which, in the Greek cultural zone in the early centuries AD, the place of *philosophia* in the world of the educated élite could be both celebrated and kept within comfortable boundaries.

This can then be connected with other currents and strategies. For it seems reasonable to propose that not just Lucian's philosophically cultivated satire, but more generally the much wider range of what might be called Greek Imperial-period philosophical *belles lettres*, should be seen as the fruit of a comparable attempt to soften the felt threat of *philosophia*, without having to sever connections with it in any damaging or discreditable way. On this view, the reason that there is so much philosophical rhetoric, or rhetorical philosophy, in Greek writing of the first three centuries AD, is that philosophy had simultaneously to be embraced and also neutralised – held close because of a perception of its high value, but at the same time made safe and normal, converted into an insider to normal educated culture from the transcendent critic of the conventional it threatened so consistently to become. Dio Chrysostom, Favorinus, Maximus of Tyre, Menander Rhetor with his prescriptions for physics as declamation (in the *physikos hymnos*)<sup>39</sup>, even Plutarch in his more elaborately literary dialogues, all become collaborators in a project of making philosophy reassuringly compatible with conventional cultural and literary values – an insider to the Hellenic heritage – instead of their detached and unsettling critic.

Home-grown Greek responses to the problem of *philosophia*, then, show a wider range of strategies than Roman, and more of an urge to control by means of a warm embrace, rather than by expressions of critical detachment. This still allows the conclusion, however, that the case of philosophy in the Greco-Roman world of the Imperial period shows us an area of high culture which, because of its peculiar nature as an institution and an ideology, managed to combine both a large measure

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<sup>39</sup> Men. Rhet. *Treatise I*, 336.25-337.32 Spengel.

of community between the Greek and the Roman halves of the ruling élite, and a number of fault-lines between the two. In the ineradicable Greekness of *philosophia*, Roman commentators had one extra, locally specific way of putting up defences against its more extreme claims; but the unease from which this sprang, and the desire to keep *philosophia* under control, was shared. In the end, far from diverging from their Greek-speaking contemporaries over *philosophia*, Roman commentators were in fact continuing a native Greek response, with the additional resource that for them, as not for the Greeks, it could be conceived as an import from a cultural as well as an intellectual outside.

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